

TRAIL & Landscape

A PUBLICATION CONCERNED WITH
NATURAL HISTORY AND CONSERVATION



TRAIL & LANDSCAPE

Editors: Anne Hanes
18 Briarcliffe Drive,
Ottawa, Ont. K1J 6E4
Sharon Godkin
Joyce Reddoch

Production Staff:
Marjorie Bond
Leone Brown
Dorothy Greene
Rosemary Wallbank

Business and Production Manager: Harry A. Thomson

THE OTTAWA FIELD-NATURALISTS' CLUB - Founded 1879 -

President: Dr. Roger Foxall, 587 Duff Crescent, Ottawa
Corr. Secretary: S. Armstrong, Box 3264, Stn. C, Ottawa

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See inside back cover.

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Centennial Report

by Hue MacKenzie

Response to our calls for proposed Centennial projects has brought a wide range of suggestions which have been discussed and evaluated by the Council as to their appropriateness. Those which have been selected for further action are listed below. We are now recruiting Project Leaders for each of these projects, and the names of those already agreeing to serve are also listed.

Support from the membership at large is vital if the Centennial is to be a success. Volunteers are needed to participate in the development of the program. If you are interested, please contact any member of the Co-ordinating Committee to tell us how you can help and which project you are especially interested in working on. It's your Centennial...the more involved you become, the more you will get out of it.

Each Project Leader (volunteers also needed) will be expected to prepare a Project Plan which will outline facts to help the Council make a final decision on whether to approve the project or not. The Co-ordinating Committee will help Project Leaders by providing advice and suggestions on how their plan can be improved.

<u>Project</u>	<u>Leader(s)</u>
Centennial Dinner	
Exhibition including Paintings, Photo Competition and Art Competition Club Pin	
Postage Stamp Issue	C. Gruchy
Articles in <u>Canadian Field-Naturalist</u> , including Club history features	
Reprint Macoun's Autobiography	S. Armstrong
Cumulative Indices - Club publications	J. Gillett
Orchids in the Ottawa District (publication)	J. & A. Reddoch
Conference: "100 Years of Natural History"	
Picnic	
Centennial Issues of <u>Trail & Landscape</u> , including Club history features	
Guide to Finding Birds in the Ottawa District	
Trail or Trails with Natural History Guides	Macoun Field Club
Special Outing and Lectures Program	E. & L. Committee

<u>CENTENNIAL CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE</u>	<u>Telephone</u>
Diana Laubitz	521-7458
Hue MacKenzie	226-1997
Diane McClymont	225-6696
Jo Ann Murray	226-1997
Ewen Todd	225-4316

Swallow Saga

Anne B. Ginns
Cantley, Quebec

Little did we know, though we might have suspected, that the farm house on "Naturalists' Paradise" we purchased 8 years ago was already occupied. We have bats, mice, voles, shrews, snakes, spiders and pseudo-scorpions; but our noisiest tenants are summer residents - the Cliff Swallows. When we arrived in July, 1969, we noticed several clay "pots" attached to the stucco of the living room wing, partly hidden by roof overhang. The "pots" were identified as being the work of Cliff Swallows, a bird completely new to me, though I'd long been fascinated by the activities of Purple Martins and Barn Swallows.

That dry summer, we also saw active Cliff Swallow nests on a neighbour's barn, and learned to separate the Cliff from the Tree, Bank, and Barn Swallows which are common in Cantley, P.Q.

In 1970, several pairs of Cliffs decided to nest on the north side of our huge hay barn and on the garage-barn. They swooped and shrieked at us whenever we intruded into their territory, which was constantly happening as we were busy with our own farm projects.

The following year an expanded population rebuilt on the stuccoed house. By then there were only remnants of the old nests so the reconstruction work was brisk. However, the birds began sitting when only a clay "shelf" had been finished. We didn't realize it then, but the mud supply probably dried up part way through the building process or the birds would have continued fashioning the typical gourd-shaped nest. When the young hatched, the activity in our yard was wild from before daybreak until after dusk.

The following year the Cliffs returned and refurbished old nests that hadn't fallen down over the winter. Nests made of good "blue" clay seem to hold up much better than those made with a sandier content. Still, the changes in atmospheric moisture and our pounding the roof to loosen ice in winter take a toll of even the best-constructed nests. That year the nests took on the typical bottle shape with a round opening too small to admit more than 2 fingers to count eggs or check young. It was no longer possible to view the nesting progress with a mirror. Even a dental mirror proved no help!



"...they finally had a
substantial clay wall
to hide behind..."

prints by G.C. Bayly
from author's slides



Everything seemed to be going well: eggs hatched and there was constant activity, with much "talking" amongst the colony members; and of course, we were dive bombed and shrieked at when we appeared. Then one morning I found a few half-grown young, dead on the ground under the nests. I thought they had just "fallen overboard", maybe from over-crowding, until a few days later the place was littered with dead young. I put up a ladder to check the nests and could see that they were literally crawling with bugs - swallow bugs as it turned out. I phoned Wilf Bell, who was then writing a bird column, and he suggested that since it was probably too late and I couldn't do more harm, that I spray with "Raid". I went back up the ladder with my aerosol can and blasted, only to have thousands of bugs rain down all over me. I leaped off the ladder, stripped off all my clothes on the way to the door, and dashed into the shower. Very few young swallows survived that year.

However, the colony returned the following May, though a little later than usual. This time I was determined to be on guard. I checked the nests as soon as there were a few egg shells on the ground. Active swallow bugs (Oeciacus vicarius Horvath), leave their excrement spots on the clay. These insects usually hide in nest crevices during daylight and do their dirty work at night, but when they're heavily concentrated, they can be seen moving in daytime too. They vary in size according to instar, from about 1 mm to 1 cm. The larger bugs are often gorged with blood. I don't understand why the adult swallows don't pick them off.

My control measures were developed with some thought. I wanted an insecticide that would kill the pests but not harm the birds immediately or latently. I thought that rotenone, which is practically harmless to warm-blooded animals, might work, and found a product called "Dri-Kil" which is used safely on chickens, though I wasn't sure of its effect on small birds. I decided not to dust the birds directly at first, plugged the nest hole with cotton and dusted the outside of the nest thoroughly. The swallow bugs moved! Since rotenone breaks down very quickly in hot weather, the process must be repeated weekly or as often as bugs are noticed. If I dusted and nothing "moved", I assumed the nest was "clean".

The adult swallows always objected to my presence by swooping and shrieking. However they were not the least put off by my handling the nest, eggs, or young if the need arose, nor by the rotenone treatment. They are devoted parents and nothing except the weather discourages them. They resume feeding immediately the ladder is removed.

After raising one brood, some of our cliffs lay a second clutch, usually of 2 eggs. One August morning in 1974, I opened the door and found a young swallow perched on the step. Fetching the ladder, I popped the bird back into its nest, only to have it jump back out followed by its sibling. I checked the

nest -- mites! Even after dusting the young birds refused to stay put. I parked them on the eavestrough but realized they would soon need shelter. Molly Bourguignon had given us an old robin shelter which had languished on a shed wall, unused. It seemed ideal as an emergency home for the Cliffs. I erected it not far from the colony and carried the young birds one by one to their new perch. The parent birds had been observing all this and immediately investigated. I assumed they would continue feeding but oh no, they began systematically carrying not food, but clay! They didn't approve of a "nest" without walls. While the youngsters begged for food, the adults mortered up the shelter. This went on all day while I stewed. Obviously, the adults must have provided some insects between loads of clay during the next few days because the youngsters remained lively while the shelter "grew" too.

We named the fledglings "Little Bird One" and "Little Bird Two" and they were constantly in trouble. Apparently they were never really at home in the shelter, even though they finally had a substantial clay wall to hide behind, because either one or the other bird would jump overboard at least once a day. One afternoon we returned from Ottawa just before a ferocious Gatineau thunderstorm hit. We'd just left the car when one little bird "soloed". Jim eyeballed the flight path into dense weeds and by some miracle retrieved Little Bird before the heavens dumped an inch of rain in a half-hour. Fortunately our duties as surrogate parents ended a few days later when both young birds became proficient fliers. In all, they used their substitute nest for about ten days, returning there at night even after they'd learned to fly properly.

Last year our swallow colony numbered 33 nests under the living room eaves, 2 nests under gables, and 2 on the barn. Most were successful, with the barn-side dwellers even putting up with reroofing! Several nests were mysteriously abandoned when the young were half grown. Perhaps the adults were caught in one of the bad summer storms, or the succeeding cold weather caused them to give up trying to obtain food. One of the gable nests, beyond the reach of our ladders, was heavily parasitized and failed.

In all, we find the Cliff Swallows enormously entertaining, although we only wish they were cleaner, in several respects! First they drop clay, then manure. It's no wonder people consider them a nuisance and knock down the nests. I spread plastic "diapers" on the ground under the nests to catch the clay and "guano" which we use to enrich the compost. If the manure is not regularly removed, the odour on hot days can be overpowering - like a chicken farm! We soon gained a new respect for the quantity of insects consumed by these birds!

Rick Poulin banded many of our Cliffs last summer and we'll be interested to know how "our" birds fared on their migrations - even though we are migrating too this year (to Europe), and won't be around to help (or hinder) nature this swallow season.

Summer & Fall Wild Foods

David White

Here is a second sampling of edible goodies available from nature's garden. They come from a variety of habitats - lawns to bogs - and are easily recognizable and generally common. The edible parts usually require little preparation.

When gathering wild foods such as roots or tubers which require you to kill the plant, be sure to leave some of the colony for future foragers or naturalists. Plants such as chickory or dandelion need little protection, but others such as Indian cucumber-root could be easily depleted in an area. Wild ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius* L.) is endangered throughout most of its range due, in large part, to the over-zealous collecting of it for use as a folk remedy.

Before eating any plant be certain you have identified it correctly. There are a number of good floras and field guides available. Many are listed in the bibliography of the first article (Spring Wild Foods, T&L 9(3):63-70, 1975) along with a number of wild food books for further reading. Avoid foraging along busy roadsides which may be contaminated with lead from auto emissions, or along boulevards and right-of-ways which may have been sprayed with herbicides or pesticides.

JUNEBERRIES (*Amelanchier* spp.)

These trees and shrubs produce their attractive white flowers in May before the leaves come out and that is the time to note their location. Return in early to mid-July for the second treat - the fruit. Some plants have better-tasting fruit than others, but a little trial and error tasting is easier than trying to identify members of this difficult genus. The berries may be eaten fresh or used in a pie. The sand flats west of Kazabazua, Quebec, are excellent areas for a low shrubby juneberry which is very productive. These areas are also very good for blueberry picking in late July to early August.

WILD GRAPE (*Vitis riparia* Michx.)

Though the fruit of our native grape is somewhat tart for fresh eating, it makes an excellent jelly and reportedly a very good wine. Any leftover grape jelly can be added to your Christmas cake recipe for a subtle treat. The banks of the Rideau River and Canal are good areas to forage for wild grapes. They ripen about mid-September.

CRANBERRIES (Vaccinium oxycoccos L. and V. macrocarpon Ait.)

These are familiar to most people but did you know that they grow locally in most of our bogs and boggy lakes? Even small areas can produce a good amount of berries. Though very tart, they make a thirst quenching nibble during a hot day of bog exploring. However, their main use is as a sauce for poultry. They ripen in late September to October, just in time for Thanksgiving.

GROUND-CHERRY (Physalis heterophylla Nees)

Physalis is not a cherry at all, but a relative of the tomatoes, nightshades and decorative Chinese lanterns. Look for this plant in pastures and overgrown meadows. The fruits are concealed inside papery husks and are ripe when the former are slightly yellow and non-sticky. They are tasty raw, in a pie, or in fruit conserve. Ground-cherries are productive during September.

ORANGE DAY-LILY (Hemerocallis fulva L.)

This lily is an escape from cultivation and is commonly seen on abandoned farmsteads and waste ground. The large unopened flowerbuds can be cut up and added to salads or soups. The plant flowers during July.

INDIAN CUCUMBER-ROOT (Medeola virginiana L.)

This rather uncommon plant grows in rich mixed woods. The root is an excellent trail nibble, or it can be sliced and added to a salad. The taste suggests a cucumber/potato cross. It is best in the fall but is good any time of year.

WATER-CRESS (Nasturtium officinale R. Br.)

This native of Europe has become naturalized in cold springs and small clear streams. It is not encountered as often as one would like, but when a colony is found it can keep you supplied with a gourmet salad green for much of the growing season.

JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE (Helianthus tuberosus L.)

This sunflower relative is common in gardens and along fencerows in the immediate Ottawa city area. There is a patch at the end of our garden and although I harvest or otherwise dig up much of the colony in the fall, it comes back as strong as ever next summer. The storage tubers are good as a salad ingredient or roasted as potatoes. They are best in the fall after a hard frost.

STAGHORN SUMAC (Rhus typhina L.)

About mid-July, when the fruit clusters have just turned red, it's time for 'sumac-ade', the north temperate answer to lemonade. Gather a quantity of heads, cover with water, and pound and stir for a short time. Then strain, add a sweetener and enjoy a refreshing drink for a hot summer day. The plant is common in open woods and overgrown meadows.

BASSWOOD (Tilia americana L.)

The flower clusters are gathered in mid-July and used to make a refreshing tea. The commonly planted European basswood (Tilia europea L.) can be similarly used. The flowers can be dried and stored for later in the year. Be careful when gathering the blossoms as they are a favourite with bees! The young fruit of basswood has been used as a substitute for chocolate or cocoa. Simply grind to a paste. Unfortunately the paste does not keep, a problem which has stymied attempts at commercial production.

CHICKORY (Cichorium intybus L.)

As coffee prices soar many people are looking for alternate beverages. Chickory is a common bush substitute which can be used alone or as an adulterant for coffee. Dry the roots gently by a fire or in a slow oven for several hours. When brittle, grind and brew as you would coffee. The aroma during roasting is heavenly, though the taste of the brew is somewhat disappointing. Chickory roots, as well as those of dandelion (Taraxacum officinale Weber), can be forced in the winter for blanched salad greens. Dig after a freeze in the fall and store as you would carrots, in a cool damp spot. Later on in the winter remove some from storage, plant in moist soil and keep in the dark (basements are ideal). Within two or three weeks you will have a crop of very delicious salad greens. They can be picked several times before the stored food of the root is exhausted and you must plant a new batch.

SOAPWORT, BOUNCING BET (Saponaria officinalis L.)

Though hardly a wild food (it is in fact poisonous!), this plant is none the less useful to campers and hikers. Saponins, soapy substances found within the tissue, make this plant useful as a soap substitute. Simply crush the plant in the hands and add water as needed.

HORSETAILS, SCOURING-RUSHES (Equisetum spp.)

These primitive plants deposit silica in their cell walls, making the plants very useful as pot scrubbers. They can be bunched up or tied together like asparagus spears for those really burned-on stains! There are several species in the area and they grow in a variety of habitats.

" G I N S I N "

Gwen Prattis

Anne Hanes, in a recent issue of Trail & Landscape, wrote a most erudite and fascinating article entitled "One Naturalist's Discovery" on her botanical find, the fabulous ginseng plant. I too became interested in ginseng, or "ginsin" as the Indians call it, when I heard first hand from members of the Chippewas of Kettle Point, Ontario, about the amazing properties of the plant. To orient the reader: I am a former Ottawan, who immigrated to the banana belt of southwestern Ontario in 1973 and I am an avid naturalist by inclination if not by profession. I was fortunate in establishing an entrée to the native peoples of the area and have added a great fund of fact and traditional fiction to my previous white man's knowledge of nature.



Gladys and the ginseng roots

print by Evelyn Vance

One of my treasured friends among the Chippewas, Gladys Lunam, told me this story of the ginseng, which I will try to put in her words:

"One day in August, my Aunt Rachael told me it was the time to find the ginsin roots so Rachael and Douglas and I drove to the woods to the place where the ginsin grows. Rachael knows about plants and trees and flowers and roots and where to find them and how Indians used these things for medicine and food and drink. When we came to the dark part of the forest, she knew there were evil spirits living there. They are called little wild Indians and they often come to the Reserve in the night and ride the horses so that the horses are tired and sweating in the morning. We made a sacred fire of tobacco to keep us from getting lost and also the tobacco smoke keeps away the snakes that harm you, and leads you to the plants you want. We walked and walked a long way and then we came to the ginsin plants. We dug enough roots for the winter and Douglas said we should go back the short way. Rachael said, 'No, we must go back the long way to the truck where we made the sacred fire and then we will be safe.' When you dig ginsin roots, you must put the red berries back in the ground so there will be more roots after a while. After you dig the roots you want, you fill in the holes and cover them over so that other roots will not be harmed. You must dig up the roots in August before the frost comes and when the red berries are on them. You can't dig them in the spring because the roots are spongy then. To make medicine, you can dry out the roots by hanging them somewhere to dry and don't pile them on top of each other. Then you can boil a root in two cups of water for half an hour to make tea. Or you can dry the roots and then pound them into a powder to use for medicine. The medicine is good for nerves and to make you relax and the Indians also use it for babies when they get stomach cramps. Ginsin is good medicine for you."

I chewed an inch of the root, which has a bittersweet but not unpleasant taste, and although I can't vouch for a miraculous cure for my minor disabilities, I can guarantee a state of euphoria which was most pleasant and I'm sure could become extremely habit-forming! I am now the proud possessor of three wild roots of ginseng, tenderly transplanted from their secret habitat somewhere in the deep woods bordering Lake Huron, to my own woods. Spring will tell the tale as to whether the operation was a success.

MACOUN FIELD CLUB CANOE TRIP



or
The August Monsoon in
La Verendrye Park, 1976

by Julia Murphy

After several weeks of organized organizational confusion, the Macoun Field Club met at the Museum of Natural Sciences. It was August 28th, 1976, a day fourteen people will never forget. Before us lay nine days in La Verendrye Park.

At two o'clock, with numb bums as a result of the six hour car ride, we pushed off into Whiskey Creek. Two hundred yards later we met the beginning of our first portage. We clambered over to meet a panoramic view of ominous rain clouds and Whiskey Lake. Before long the sky dumped its pernicious burden on the high-spirited Macouners. As soon as we were thoroughly drenched it stopped, and so did we.

It cleared up that evening and inspired one of our leaders, "Wes" Hunter, to catch us two pickerel for breakfast. We were camped at the beginning of a portage to Lac Cawatose. needless to say that was one of our "smaller" campsites.

Contrary to all of our optimistic predictions of the previous night, the second day dawned dismal, grey, sinister and generally foreboding, but we made it over the portage with relative success. As we were paddling our hearts out, pausing to watch a Sharp-shinned Hawk, a wicked wind picked up. Before long our gunwales were awash as the whitecaps crashed on our bows.

Much fortified by the hearty nourishment of soup and Lebanese bread, we battled insurmountable odds to reach the next portage. Some of us had more fun than others. I had the honour of travelling in a contraption called the Ogwat (short for Oh God! What's that?). It was a mishmash of rain ponchos and make-shift poles. Unfortunately the "retracted" sail managed to take us a fair distance downwind before things were under control. The whole time, I was preparing to capsize but not forgetting to thank providence that my pack was in another canoe. We survived to the next portage, following faint pink rain-poncho dots seen on the horizon through rain-blinded glasses.

drawings by David Beddoe

This portage took us to Lac Camitogama. Here Graham (the instigator of the Ogwat and other insane follies) decided we must paddle six more upwind miles. Needless to say we stopped just around the point on an island campsite. It was at this fateful campsite that Elisabeth Beaubien, our other leader, and her partner were left behind to contemplate death by freezing. There was a small handcarved sign on the island proclaiming it to be Mosquitoless Island. The maker of this ironic sign must have been ignorant of the fact that one rarely finds mosquitoes in the Antarctic. As we were forced to be our own measure of temperature, after contemplating it we hit the sack at 6 or 7. The only thing missing from a 9-ton science pack, also Graham's work, was a thermometer.

Next morning's weather? Ditto, ditto. It took us until 10 o'clock to gather up enough courage to leave the nice, warm(?) island for what seemed to be 20-foot tidal waves. Little did we know what was in store for us.

At about 12 o'clock EDT a lognut (Macoun jargon for a patch of blue sky) appeared. Half an hour later, after crossing into Lac Carrière by towing the canoes through a narrow, deep stream, we were stationed on a beautiful sandy point, and not a cloud in sight. Luxury at its ultimate! A Bald Eagle gave a show across the lake. Our spirits soared as high as the eagle!



Whoopee! Before long the beach was strewn with wet clothes, tents, junk, canoes, and every possible kind of canoeing paraphernalia. This did not inhibit a Sanderling and its entourage of 4 Semipalmated Sandpipers and plovers from enjoying the weather on our misplaced Caribbean island as the palms swayed in the breeze. The afternoon was spent getting warm, drying out, seeing rare birds, seining for fish, and staging the Macoun Olympics. A lesson in gutting fish followed dinner and then to bed to dream of the glorious weather we were sure would never depart. Being cold was a thing of the past.

So we thought. How foolish we were in our childish exuberance. I needn't mention the next morning's weather conditions. We paddled out of Lac Carrière through a sphagnum bog and down MacLaren Creek. This was truly a ghostly place. We rounded each bend expecting to see a moose staring us in the face or an ancient Indian spirit wafting through the mist. It was freezing.

At lunch we built a fire to thaw Ziggy's (Elisabeth's) frozen form. We burnt our mouths in bliss. There were three portages ahead. We were now travelling through a different type of forest. Less water and more of the vegetation typical of bogs and other soggy places. (Maybe a reflection on the weather?)

That night we established a permanent (2-day) camp on Lac Desty. Our already singed mouths were treated to super spicy, hot chili - but food is food, appreciated by Macouners in any size, shape, or form (almost).

The next two days were spent resting our leaden, throbbing arms, seining for fish, birdwatching, gunnel-bobbing, doing water tests, soil sampling, plant identification, attempting to collect pollen samples, offering three dollars to the person who could locate a spruce grouse (no takers), eating, sleeping, and, any Macouner's favourite: freezing to death. We also would have starved to death except for dear old Wessie-Kinnies (Wes's nickname) who spent every spare second fishing. (Thank the Lord).

Then, miracles of all miracles, we actually had an entire day of nice weather! This was the second day at Lac Desty, and the sixth of the trip.

When it came time for us to leave our home away from home, the sky responded with rain and an easily-recognized grey colour. We paddled to Lac Nishkotea and from there portaged to Lac Canamina.

It is important to note at this point that nerves were getting a bit frayed. I can mention two canoe partners who by this time were reduced to squabbling like 90-year-old spinster biddies, much to everyone's amusement.

At around 4 o'clock we stopped at a sandy beach at the far end of Lac Canamina and sent scouts on ahead to see what our chances were for a campsite. They returned with no good news, so we set up camp. When this was done, we noticed that pulling the canoes across an exposed sand bar had created a channel between two different water levels. This grew almost to river proportions within an hour, so we named it Macoun River. By the morning we had to walk along canoes to ford the stream.

By this time we had become totally immune to rain and set off without thinking twice about it. As we paddled along that day, we made up a song about the canoe trip.

"One day poor old Wesley
While fishing for our lunch,
Was caught by a giant pike,
And in its jaws did crunch!"

There was one verse per person with everyone dying at the end of their verse. Methods of death ranged from acid in Tang, tangling in seine nets, falling into fires, and heart failure.



We stopped for the night on Lac Camatose. We managed to hear, through our songs, some weird noises. At first our guesses as to the cause ranged from insane canoeists to rabid dogs. Then we heard it again. Now there was no doubt in our minds: they were wolves. Of course we shut up after that hoping to hear them again.

We had been making fudge at the time. The first batch - chocolate - was such a success, that in desperation and with watering mouths, we made Carasunraz fudge. Carasunraz, you ask, what's that? Don't ask unless caramel, sunflower seed and raspberry jam fudge is your idea of a yummy breakfast. Take my word, it's not.

Three of the less brilliant members of our group slept out in the rain and met with rather unfortunate circumstances. At about 3 a.m. they were sleeping in a river of water and moved in with their friends (?!), abandoning their waterlogged sleeping bags. They insisted on singing until they were hoarse - supposedly to forget they were freezing to death. Then, without even allowing the rest of the group three measly hours of sleep, they picked up again at 6:30 a.m. No one was too pleased with them in the morning; you may rest assured.

When we rose on the morrow (the last day) the Arctic wind knifed through our thin, soaked, and useless clothing. It was a typical La Verendrye day. Before long our way was obstructed by a dam. After daring each other to go down the log chute, we all took the easy way - down a sandy, perpendicular cliff. We arrived at the drop off point to watch one of our drivers paddle up behind us.

The stop at Le Domaine restaurant was much appreciated and we gorged ourselves on all the food we knew how to order in French.

Attempts to sleep on the way back were largely unsuccessful, but we all got home safe and sound, summarized the whole trip for our parents and dropped into bed. It was lovely to be there and think that even if it poured rain the next day, we would be warm, dry, and inside. But it was much worse to be there and realize it was all over, that school was starting in two days and we wouldn't be in the wilderness swearing at the weather again for another whole, long, school year.

It was beautiful, sunny, and warm the next day.

CONIFEROUS TREES OF THE OTTAWA AREA

M.J. Shchepanek

*"This is the land our fathers knew,
Rugged, pure and fine;
The rocky hills, the skies of blue,
The tall majestic pine."*

Robert L. McGill captured the spirit of the northern forest in his poem "The Northland", as countless poets and artists have done in expressing their deep feelings towards the Canadian woods, so characterized by the coniferous trees. If you stop and think for a minute, you will soon realize just how much our lives revolve around these valuable trees. The homes we live in, the furniture we use, the newspapers and books we read, the landscaping around our homes and in our parks, and the outdoor recreation we seek out and enjoy, are all made possible in large part by coniferous trees.

The conifers are profusely branched trees. The main stem bears successive whorls of very regularly arranged lateral branches. These are usually differentiated into long and short shoots. The small and numerous leaves are either needle-shaped or scale-like; they may be borne in spirals, in pairs, or in whorls; they are evergreen with the exception of tamarack (larch), firm textured, and adapted for moisture conservation during the dry winter period. Resin canals are frequently common throughout all parts of these plants. The "flowers" are unisexual and the female inflorescence becomes the woody cone.

The two largest forest regions in eastern Canada are the Boreal and the Great lakes - St. Lawrence. The Boreal forest is noted for its abundance of coniferous trees, but the Great Lakes - St. Lawrence forest has the greatest diversity of coniferous species. The Ottawa area is part of this latter region. The total number of native coniferous trees in the Ottawa area is eleven. Common juniper (Juniperus communis L.) and Canada yew or ground hemlock (Taxus canadensis Marsh) are not included as they are considered to be coniferous shrubs and not trees. Scotch pine (Pinus sylvestris L.), an import from Europe, has been commonly planted throughout the area as an ornamental and as a Christmas tree crop, as well as in wind breaks and hedge rows. It is therefore included with the native flora of the Ottawa area.

The key and descriptions given in this article are based only on easily identifiable characteristics and should be more than sufficient to identify the twelve coniferous trees listed. The more serious student may wish to consult the "Native Trees of Canada" by R.C. Hosie or the "Forest Trees of Ontario" by J.H. White.

A Key to the Coniferous Trees of the Ottawa Area

- 1 Needles in clusters of 2 or more, or
reduced to overlapping scales 2
- 2 Needles in clusters of 2 or more 3
- 3 Needles in clusters of 5 or more,
tips not sharp pointed 4
- 4 Needles in clusters of 5, 2½ to 5 inches long White Pine
- 4 Needles in clusters of 10 or more, 1 inch long Tamarack
- 3 Needles in clusters of 2, tips sharp pointed 5
- 5 Needles long (4 to 6 inches) Red Pine
- 5 Needles short (1 to 2 inches) 6
- 6 Needles straight or slightly twisted,
light yellow-green..... Jack Pine
- 6 Needles strongly twisted, blue-green Scotch Pine
- 2 Leaves reduced to overlapping scales 7
- 7 Overlapping scales with a flat appearance
on twig, dull yellow-green White Cedar
- 7 Overlapping scales in 4 rows forming 4-sided
twigs, dark blue-green Red Cedar
- 1 Needles solitary, not reduced to overlapping scales 8
- 8 Needles 4-sided in cross section, tips sharp pointed 9
- 9 Needles less than ½ inch long; tree branches
drooping with upturned ends Black Spruce
- 9 Needles more than ½ inch long; tree branches
standing straight out from main stem 10
- 10 Twigs hairless; needles dull blue-green White Spruce
- 10 Twigs with numerous short hairs; needles
shiny yellow-green Red Spruce
- 8 Needles flat in cross section, blunt tipped 11
- 11 Needles less than ¾ inch long; drooping branches .. Hemlock
- 11 Needles more than ¾ inch long, branches
standing straight out from main stem Balsam Fir



White Pine X 3/4



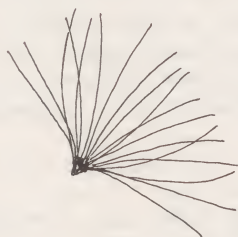
Red Pine X 3/8



Jack Pine X 3/4



Scotch Pine X 3/4



Tamarack X 3/4



White Spruce X 1-1/2



Black Spruce X 1-1/2



Red Spruce X 1-1/2



Hemlock X 1-1/2



Balsam Fir X 1-1/2



White Cedar X 1-1/3



Red Cedar X 1-1/2

WHITE PINE (Pinus strobus L.) is the largest conifer in eastern Canada, reaching diameters of 5 feet and heights of 175 feet. It is very common throughout the Ottawa District. The LEAVES or needles are in clusters of 5 and are 2 1/2 to 5 inches long. They are slender, flexible, soft, and blue-green in colour with finely toothed leaf edges. The CONES are cylindrical, averaging 3 to 8 inches in length, and 1 inch across with a 3/4 inch stalk. The cones open in early fall and release seeds which have a 3/4 inch long wing at one end.

RED PINE (Pinus resinosa Ait.) is a fairly large tree that attains a maximum height of 125 feet and a diameter of 3 feet. It is found in isolated pockets, usually mixed with white pine. The LEAVES are in clusters of 2 and are 4 to 6 inches long. They are slender, flexible, sharp pointed, a shiny dark green colour, and the edges are finely and sharply toothed. The CONES are ovoid, being about 2 inches long and almost stalkless. They open in the fall and discharge the one-winged seeds (wing 3/8 inch long).

JACK PINE (Pinus banksiana Lamb.) is a medium-sized tree that reaches heights of 75 feet and diameters of 2 feet. It prefers a sandy soil habitat and is somewhat rare in our general area but can be found commonly at Constance Bay (all 4 pines can be found growing there). The LEAVES are in whorls of 2 and are short, 1 to 2 inches long. They are straight or slightly twisted, stiff, sharp pointed, spread apart, a light yellow-green colour, and the edges are toothed. The CONES are mainly conical in shape, about 2 inches long and usually curved. The cones remain closed on the tree for a long time but occasionally open to release a black, ridged seed (wing 3/8 inch long).

SCOTCH PINE (Pinus sylvestris L.) is a hardy, fast-growing, medium-sized to tall tree that reaches heights of 60 to 90 feet and diameters up to 2 feet. Although it is an import from Europe, it has been planted throughout the Ottawa area and can be included with our native pines. The bark flakes from the upper part of the tree, exposing a noticeable orange-coloured surface. The LEAVES are blue-green in colour, twisted, 2 in a cluster, and are about 2 inches long with a sharp pointed tip. The CONES are conical, about 2 inches long, and the scale ends are raised up into projections. The cones open in the autumn of the second season and release red-brown seeds (wing 3/4 inch long).

TAMARACK (Larix laricina (Du Roi) Koch), also known as larch, is a medium-sized tree that reaches heights of 70 feet and diameters of 2 feet. This tree prefers cool, moist soils with adequate exposure to sunlight and is commonly found near edges of water courses and swamps. The LEAVES are needle-shaped, about 1 inch long, flexible and soft, and arranged in clusters of up to 20. They are a light green colour and turn yellow in the fall before they are shed. The CONES are about 1/2 inch long, a little longer than they are broad, and are held erect by short, stout, curved stalks. The cones mature in one year, drop their seeds in the fall (wing 1/4 inch long), but the empty cones remain on the tree for another year.

WHITE SPRUCE (Picea glauca (Moench) Voss) is a medium-sized tree that usually reaches heights of 80 feet and diameters of 2 feet. This spruce is very common in our area and can be found in a variety of habitats. The LEAVES are needle-shaped, 3/4 inch in length, stiff, 4-sided in cross section, and blue-green in colour. TWIGGS are hairless and light yellowish-gray. The CONES of the white spruce are 1 3/4 inches in length, blunt at the end when closed, and narrowly cylindrical with close-fitting, light brown, smooth-margined scales. The cones, after dropping their seeds in the fall, drop off the tree during the winter.

BLACK SPRUCE (Picea mariana (Mill.) B.S.P.) is a small-sized tree which reaches heights of about 50 feet and diameters of 10 inches. This tree is local in the Ottawa area and is confined mainly to bogs (e.g. Mer Bleue). The LEAVES are needle-shaped, usually 1/2 inch or less long, stiff, 4-sided in cross section, and a dull, dark blue-green in colour. The dark brown TWIGGS are covered with dense, short, rusty-coloured hairs. The CONES of the black spruce are about 1 inch long, ovoid in shape, pointed at one end when closed, and almost spherical when open. The cone-scales have a rough, toothed margin and are purplish to dark brown in colour. The cones, after dropping their seeds throughout the winter, may remain on the tree for many years.

RED SPRUCE (Picea rubens Sarg.) is a medium-sized tree that reaches heights of up to 80 feet and diameters of 2 feet. Red spruce is a dominant tree of the Eastern Acadian Forest, and although at the edge of its range in the Ottawa area, isolated trees can be found (e.g. Gatineau Park). The LEAVES are needle-shaped, about 3/4 inch long, stiff, 4-sided in cross section, and a shiny yellow-green colour. The light red-brown TWIGGS are covered with dense, short, rusty-coloured hairs. The CONES are about 1 1/2 inches long, ovoid in shape, and pointed at the end. The scales have a lightly toothed or rough margin and are brown in colour. The cones, after dropping their seeds in the autumn, usually remain on the tree until next summer.

WHITE CEDAR (Thuja occidentalis L.) is a small-sized tree averaging about 50 feet in height and 1 foot in diameter, but under favourable conditions may grow much larger. It is very common throughout our area. The LEAVES are in the form of flat, overlapping, dull green scales about 1/8 inch long, which lie close against the branches. The CONES are about 3/8 inch long, oval in shape, a yellow-brown colour, with scales in opposite pairs. They mature in late summer and are shed the next year.

RED CEDAR (Juniperus virginiana L.) is a small tree up to 30 feet in height and 8 inches in diameter. Once fairly common in our area, it is now restricted to a few isolated localities (e.g. Luskville - Eardley area in Quebec). The LEAVES are dark blue-green overlapping scales similar to those of the white cedar, but are smaller, only about 1/16 inch long. The leaves are in 4 rows, forming 4-sided twigs like plaited cords. Red cedar also produces a second type of leaf, which is needle-like, not overlapping but individual, and about 1/2 inch in length. The FRUITS are blue-green in colour with a whitish bloom, spherical in shape with a 1/8 to 1/4 inch diameter, and resemble blueberries when mature. The berry contains one or two wingless seeds.

HEMLOCK (Tsuga canadensis (L.) Carr.) is a graceful, medium-sized tree with drooping branches, usually to 70 feet in height with diameters of 2 to 4 feet. The hemlock is a common conifer throughout the Ottawa area. The LEAVES are dark green above and have 2 longitudinal white stripes underneath, have indented tips, are flat in cross section, 1/3 to 2/3 of an inch in length, have thin stalks and are singly placed on the branch. The CONES are ovoid in shape, about 3/4 inch long, light brown in colour, have pointed tips, and the scales have rather smooth margins. The cones discharge their seeds over the winter and fall off the tree by spring.

BALSAM FIR (Abies balsamea (L.) Mill.) is a medium-sized tree up to 70 feet in height and up to 2 inches in diameter. Balsam is a very common tree throughout our area. The LEAVES are flat in shape, a shiny dark green above and white beneath, from 3/4 to 1 1/4 inches in length, with a rounded or notched tip. The CONES are oblong, 2 1/2 inches long by 1 inch wide, and differ from most other coniferous cones by standing erect on the branch rather than hanging down. The cones mature and drop their seeds and cone-scales by fall, but the central cone-axes remain on the tree until at least the next summer.

A Duckling Drama

by Claudia Smith

The female Black Duck plus her eight brown fluffed ducklings waddled quietly down the rocky shore and slipped into the water with little rippling splashes. Swiftly they swam along the shore of the Shirleys Bay causeway, away from the car that had unwittingly disturbed them on the shore. The mother was very watchful and cautious. The ducklings bumped together softly whenever she stopped suddenly to sense any danger.

The mother and her little ones turned suddenly, and returning along the shore they passed the parked car. The ever-watchful mother was agitated, alternately stopping suddenly and then swimming so rapidly that water flowed over her back. The family disappeared behind a group of large rocks on the shoreline.

A moment later a single duckling suddenly reappeared, cheeping loudly and plaintively as it swam back past the car. Calling and calling, it swam quickly along the shore. Several times it scrambled up onto the rocks, and then slipped back into the water again. Its insistent cheeps sounded small and lonely along the bay's shore.

Suddenly it turned away from the shore and began swimming purposefully out into the bay, still calling. The duckling swam farther and farther from the shore, into the vicinity of a large loon which was placidly floating in the fading evening light.

The loon, which had been aware of the approach of the little lost creature, suddenly dived and surfaced right behind the duckling. Was there to be an attack? The duckling immediately changed its direction. The loon stretched itself up on the water and flapped its black and white wings several times. This seemed to frighten the duckling and it headed shoreward quickly.

The loon dived twice more, each time surfacing gently just behind the fleeing duckling. The little duck was now heading straight for the rocky shore.

The duckling reached the shore and climbed up on the rocks, leaving its friendly pursuer behind. The duckling disappeared among the rocks but its plaintive lost cries could still be heard in the evening air. Then the cheeping stopped abruptly. Hopefully the baby was reunited with its family and was snuggled safely into the nest for the night.

Meanwhile that kindly mentor, the loon, continued its leisurely floating and diving out on Shirleys Bay.

A BLUE HERON HERONRY NEAR OTTAWA

Edgar B.W. Mulligan

The first time I saw a Great Blue Heron I was fishing speckled trout in a small creek near Quyon in September of 1929. The reason I remember so well is that I saw not one, but four: one extra large and two small ones, with another intermediate in size. These birds, which my father called blue cranes, were forgotten in the many years I spent in northern Canada. I next noticed Great Blue Herons in 1949 beside a small creek near the place where I first saw these graceful summer visitors of ours. Since then I have seen them many times each year, and one could say that the heron is one of my closest wild bird friends.

On June 6, 1970, while I was out prospecting, I came across a small heronry in a beaver swamp. There were 7 nests and I counted 7 adult herons. I went back on July 1 of that year and counted 7 adults, and 6 young in 4 nests.

In 1971 I revisited the site on May 17 and counted 10 adult herons and 9 nests, but most of these nests were old ones and some of them looked refurbished. These were all at least 25 feet up in the branches of dead spruce and tamarack. I visited the heronry several times that summer, and 8 young birds survived for a total of 18 herons on July 18. There were still 6 birds at the site on August 2, but when I visited the heronry on August 8, they were all gone.

By now the heronry had become a very interesting project, so when spring came in 1972 I was anxious to see the first of the great birds arriving from the south. On April 29 I counted 3 adult herons, and by May 7 the total colony of 13 had arrived. On June 17 I noted the first young, and by July 3 there were 10 young. I returned on July 15 and 16 and was shocked to see the pond nearly empty. The beaver dam had been broken and the water level was down at least 6 feet. It was easy to walk to the nest trees. There were only 2 young birds left in the nests and about half the nests had been broken. I suspect that predators had destroyed most of the young birds and the nests. This was a very disappointing experience and I thought that this was the end of the heronry.

In the springs of 1973 and 1974 my attention was directed elsewhere and I made only a couple of visits to my heronry. I discovered that the beaver dam was rebuilt and that there were about 13 herons, counting young ones, on July 1, and about 5 new nests.

On May 3, 1975, I counted 7 adult herons which seemed to be mostly males - at least, 5 of the birds were more colourful than the other 2. On weekend visits in that season I counted:

May 11:	9	adults	
" 25	15	"	
June 7	15	"	
" 21	14	"	6 young
June 29, 30; July 1	15	"	11 "
" 13	14	"	15 "
" 20	13	"	16 "
" 27	7	"	9 "
August 3	6	"	
" 17	1	"	

On Good Friday of 1976 there was snow in the cedar swamp and no herons had arrived, but by May 2 I found 5 herons, and by May 16 the heronry was a hive of activity. On my weekend visits that year I counted:

May 15, 16:	23	adults	
" 24	24	"	
June 12	26	adults and 12 young	
" 20	24	"	23 "
" 26	25	"	27 "
July 4, 5	24	"	34 "
11	26	"	36 "
17	22	"	34 "
25	17	"	34 "
August 1	13	"	21 "
8	11	"	8 "
15	3	herons, possibly 1 adult and 2 young	
21		no herons	

I spent about 5 hours at the heronry on June 12. The 23 nests, new and old, were quite a sight. As I watched the activity there, a fawn came up to within 6 feet of me. When its mother heard its 'blah' bleat she came rushing up to within 20 feet of where I was quietly observing. Besides that, a Blue-winged Teal quacked at me 4 or 5 times. A very exciting afternoon, I must say!

On my latest visit, August 21, all that was left was about 25 empty nests on 11 dead spruce and tamarack. It was, I hope, the end of a most successful breeding year.

From a modest start in 1970 of 7 adults, through a minor catastrophe in 1972, numbers climbed to a high of 62 adult and young herons on July 11, 1976. I think with this progress we will be enjoying these lovely big birds in the Ottawa Valley for many years to come.

The only other ornithologists who know the location of this heronry live in Ottawa and are well known in the Club.

UNIDENTIFIED FLOATING OBJECTS

On October 20, 1975, Murray Outhet, Bill McLean and Neil MacLaren, all of the National Capital Commission, were engaged in dry docking a boat at an island in Newbury Lake in the Rideau Lakes district of Ontario. While working in the water they picked up two balls drifting along the gravelly bottom.

The cove was subject to frequent wave action and was skirted by a stand of white pine. The lake was relatively shallow, with numerous weed patches and was well stocked with smallmouth bass.

The balls, four to six inches in diameter, were carefully wrapped up and brought to the Canadian Aquatic Identification Centre for examination. They were composed of white pine needles, and a few grasses, seeds, algae and fish bones, all of which were tightly intermeshed as if woven. No glue-like substance was present. A variety of animals had decided that these balls made the ideal home: aquatic worms (Oligochaeta), flatworms (Turbellaria), and crustaceans (Amphipoda, Ostracoda, and Isopoda). The animals inhabiting the balls were very abundant.

What exactly are these objects? How are they formed? Repetition of certain unknown phenomena which created the balls seems possible. The right combination of storms, currents and winds may break off a mass of needles from the edge of the forest litter. By rolling along the bottom the needles may pack into a ball. Or perhaps we may speculate that it might be the deft paws of a beaver or muskrat which pat a 'pineburger' into shape.

With summer on the way, more of these unidentified floating objects may be spotted, which will give us a further clue as to how they were formed. We received a rumour of the existence of similar objects in a shallow lake in British Columbia. If there are any sightings, please contact the CAIC to let us know.

J. Madill
Freshwater Unit
Canadian Aquatic Identification Centre
Museum of Natural Sciences
Ottawa (613) 996-1690



1
Exterior of a ball. Diameter 4"



2
Interior of a ball after being
cut open. Width $4\frac{1}{2}$ ", height 3".



3
Close up of Fig. 2 showing inner packing of the pine needles.

Paul Matthews with Richard Poulin

May - June - July - August: This is the third of five articles in a series, each covering the same period of time as the issue of Trail & Landscape in which it appears.

Lack of space makes it impossible to give precise directions to the various places mentioned. Please get in touch with someone knowledgeable if more details are required. Rick Poulin will have moved when you receive this issue, and at the time of writing, his new number was not known. You may call Paul Matthews at 236-2543 who, if he can't answer your questions himself, will tell you how to get in touch with Rick. We were still without any news of the status of the dyke at Shirleys Bay while writing this article, so again we must assume that it will be closed to birders in '77. If the dyke is open to the public, all we can say is: go there whenever possible!

May is the warbler and vireo month, and there are two super spots for these birds in Ottawa: Vincent Massey Park and the woods at the Britannia filtration plant. Whenever you have a spare moment, even in the evening, visit them - they are fantastic! The Arboretum, and the trail opposite the EMR Geomagnetic Laboratories on Anderson Rd, are other good places.

You must learn the song of the PINE WARBLER (94), otherwise you'll almost surely miss them. They're most common very early in May (at Britannia) as are GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET (95) and RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET (96). During the course of the month, if you use Vincent Massey and Britannia enough, you shouldn't have too much trouble seeing BLACK AND WHITE WARBLER (97), TENNESSEE WARBLER (98), NASHVILLE WARBLER (99), PARULA WARBLER (100), YELLOW WARBLER (101), MAGNOLIA WARBLER (102), CAPE MAY WARBLER (103), BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER (104), YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (105), BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER (106), BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER (107), CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER (108), BAY-BREASTED WARBLER (109), BLACKPOLL WARBLER (110), PALM WARBLER (111), OVENBIRD (112), NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH (113), MOURNING WARBLER (114), WILSON'S WARBLER (115), CANADA WARBLER (116), AMERICAN REDSTART (117), as well as SOLITARY VIREO (118), RED-EYED VIREO (119), PHILADELPHIA VIREO (120) and WARBLING VIREO (121). Palm Warblers can be difficult; remember they wag their tails, like tamarack trees and are often seen on the ground.

Throughout May you should be on the lookout for DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT (122) anywhere on the Ottawa River. This is a toughie, but one you should see. In early May, by checking the river and the pond at Britannia, you'll probably find COMMON LOON (123), RED-NECKED GREBE (124) and GREEN HERON (125). Don't forget to look up for OSPREY (126). Other spots along the Ottawa River, near Shirleys Bay for instance, should produce

these species if Britannia fails to do so. In the woods at Britannia, YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER (127) and WINTER WREN (128) can be seen. The filtration plant pond is also a good spot for swallows: BANK SWALLOW (129), BARN SWALLOW (130), CLIFF SWALLOW (131) and PURPLE MARTIN (132) should be fairly easy.

At Vincent Massey Park in early May BELTED KINGFISHER (133), BROWN THRASHER (134) and WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (135) are all common. CHIPPING SPARROW (136) can usually be found wherever there are small conifers, frequently on lawns. You'll probably see RUFOUS-SIDED TOWHEE (137) while looking for other things, but if you want to make sure, go to the Pine Grove on Davidson Rd during the first ten days of May. Similarly, RUSTY BLACKBIRD (138) is common, but might be overlooked - try the swampy bit on the Jack Pine Trail during the second week of the month.

During the middle of May especially, but also throughout the month, trips to Ramsayville Marsh (Anderson Rd), the end of Ridge Rd and the trail opposite the EMR Geomagnetic Labs can be very profitable (all 3 stops can be made in a morning). You should see: AMERICAN BITTERN (139), BROAD-WINGED HAWK (140), COMMON GALLINULE (141), BLACK TERN (142), EASTERN KINGBIRD (143), GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER (144), LEAST FLYCATCHER (145), HOUSE WREN (146), BOBOLINK (147), NORTHERN ORIOLE (148), WOOD THRUSH (149), SWAINSON'S THRUSH (150), VEERY (151), ROSE-BREASTED GROSBILL (152), AMERICAN GOLDFINCH (153), VESPER SPARROW (154), SAVANNAH SPARROW (155) and SWAMP SPARROW (156). Rufous-sided Towhee can also be found here. By playing a tape recording of its calls, you can often attract VIRGINIA RAIL (157) to the side of the marsh where you can get a reasonably good look at it. SORA (158) is quite a bit harder and you'll probably have to settle for a listen unless you do some wading. LONG-BILLED MARSH WREN (159) is present here; another good spot is Constance Creek near Dunrobin. PURPLE FINCH (160) should be easy to see along the trail, but if you're still missing this bird, I guarantee you will not see two hundred species of birds in Ottawa this year! Also along the trail, watch for FIELD SPARROW (161). Look hard in dense shrubby areas for LINCOLN'S SPARROW (162).

By this time, Vincent Massey will have yielded SPOTTED SANDPIPER (168), RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD (164) and SCARLET TANAGER (165). For AMERICAN COOT (166), a special trip to Black Bay, just beyond Thurso, might be necessary; the middle of the month is probably the best time. A morning excursion to Thurso-Black Bay should also include a short run along a spit of land at the Masson Ferry. There is a road going east along the river just at the ferry dock, and the immediate area can be spectacular as small migrants tend to concentrate there. COMMON TERN (167) will be present along the Ottawa River from about the second week of May, and WILSON'S PHALAROPE (168) should be at Richmond sewage lagoon during the latter half of the month. If not, try Munster sewage lagoon. Watch for NORTHERN PHALAROPE throughout this period on the river or at sewage lagoons.

Late May to early June is the time to be on the lookout for two rather scarce species: YELLOW-BELLIED FLYCATCHER (169) and OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER (170). No one spot is best for these birds; simply be aware of the possibility of their presence wherever you happen to be birding. In late May, from the 20th on, go to the river early in the morning to try and see BRANT (171) as they fly overhead. The South March area, especially along Old Carp Rd, will probably produce WHIP-POOR-WILL (172) if you go at dusk. COMMON NIGHTHAWK (173) will now be hunting for insects over the city, also at dusk, as will CHIMNEY SWIFT (174). EASTERN WOOD PEWEE (175) and CEDAR WAXWING (176) will have appeared at Vincent Massey Park by this time.

Trips to Richmond Marsh should be particularly rewarding in late May. Along the railway tracks just south of town on County Road 5, walk west - you will pick up INDIGO BUNTING (177), and at the marsh itself YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO (178), BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO (179), ALDER FLYCATCHER (180), WILLOW FLYCATCHER (181), SHORT-BILLED MARSH WREN (182), GRAY CATBIRD (183) and COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (184). More than one trip will almost certainly be required to see all of the above, but be brave and go as often as possible, even if it does mean walking those awful railway tracks.

If you feel that there aren't enough days in May to accommodate all these trips, you may be right - but that's an indication of just how hectic May birding is!

June is a good deal quieter than May, but there are still some interesting new breeders to be seen. The highlight of 1976 Ottawa birding was probably the arrival of YELLOW RAILS at Richmond. With luck, they'll be here again this year. The first weekend of June, go to the marsh about an hour before dawn if you're interested in hearing this rare bonus bird. Unfortunately the chances of seeing one are nil unless you go wading with some friends and are able to corner one so that it flushes.

Another bird that will almost undoubtedly require some wading to see is LEAST BITTERN (185). The best places for them are the marshes from Thurso to Black Bay. Since you are now used to it, you can go into the marsh which Highway 16 cuts through, south of North Gower, to see Soras.

If you missed UPLAND PLOVER (186), try to find them in large fields - behind Uplands airport, the Fallowfield and Richmond Road intersection, or the fields near the Shirleys Bay turnoff from Highway 17. Also behind the airport, GRASSHOPPER SPARROW (187) and CLAY-COLORED SPARROW (188) can be found fairly regularly perched on fences. RED-HEADED WOODPECKER (189) and MOCKINGBIRD (190) are two rather rare birds. You would do well to check the newspapers for their whereabouts. There are usually Red-headed Woodpeckers on a woodlot about 3 fields back from where a creek crosses Armstrong Rd, on the south side. Last year, Mockingbirds could be found near a sand pit south of Bell High School on Cedarview Rd.

It is well worth a morning excursion to Lac Philippe sometime from the 15th to the 20th of June, to try to see GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER (191). You don't have to go too early since these warblers only really start singing when it's fairly warm. Once at Lac Philippe look for a sandy road opposite the first parking space; fifty yards or so down this road you will come to a gate. Take the road at the gate and walk for about three miles. You should have seen quite a few Golden-winged warblers by then. It is essential to know their song, however, otherwise you won't know they are around. This walk can also produce Winter Wren, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Mourning Warbler and Canada Warbler. We emphasize that you must know your bird songs, since birds will be difficult to see now that all the leaves are out.

July is a poor month as far as new birds are concerned, but keep checking the newspapers to see if any rarities, or birds you have missed previously, have been sighted. A bird to look for during August is BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON (192). Ramsayville Marsh, Britannia and Black Bay are the best spots for this nocturnal species.

Things pick up again in August, and you should start concentrating on shorebirds. This is where the absence of Shirleys Bay as a birding spot will really be felt, but other good places for shorebirds are Ottawa Beach (just west of the Britannia Drive-in on Highway 17), Watt's Creek, Thurso, Almonte, Munster and Richmond sewage lagoons, and along the Ottawa at Wychwood on the Quebec side.

With some effort, you can see SEMIPALMATED PLOVER (193), GREATER YELLOWLEGS (194), LESSER YELLOWLEGS (195), PECTORAL SANDPIPER (196), LEAST SANDPIPER (197), SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER (198), STILT SANDPIPER (199), SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER (200) and NORTHERN PHALAROPE (201). Though you have reached the magic number (theoretically), you still aren't satisfied, of course. Watt's Creek is an especially good spot for SOLITARY SANDPIPER (202) and Ottawa Beach is usually above average (though it didn't produce in '76) for BAIRD'S SANDPIPER (203). The latter generally prefer more grassy habitats than most other shorebirds.

After the 20th of August, you can start looking for AMERICAN GOLDEN PLOVER (204) and BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER (205) in ploughed fields. A good place for these plovers is the area near the Fallowfield and Greenbank Roads intersection.

Remember to check Vincent Massey Park and Britannia Woods throughout May. Britannia ridge is also a great place in August. Don't hesitate to call in your rare sightings to Paul Matthews at 236-2543, who will also try to answer questions and can give you Rick Poulin's new number.

The months of January and February were characterized in many respects by extremes. While January was very cold, February was abnormally warm and snowfall over the entire period was certainly not heavy. Birding seemed to fit the same pattern. Much of January was rather dull, but a number of unusual finds were reported in February. Owl sightings were also more prevalent in the latter month, and the numbers of some of the finches increased then as well.

Normally grebes are far south of us at this time of year, but no fewer than 3 birds of this family were found in Feb. Two Red-necked Grebes were picked up, but neither survived. A week later, a Horned Grebe landed in the snow near Blackburn Hamlet. It was banded and released in Manotick. The new year started off with a report of a Canada Goose at Manotick. A few days later it was joined by a lingering Wood Duck, which was transported there from Shirleys Bay. However, its fate is questionable. The Bufflehead recorded on the count was only observed until the 3rd of Jan., but the Barrow's Goldeneye was present throughout the period. Early arrivals included a Red-head on Feb. 14 and 5 Pintails on Feb. 27.

Very few hawks were seen during the period. Except for 2 Red-tails spotted on Jan. 1 and 30, buteos were non-existent. Only Goshawks and Kestrels were seen with any regularity, and even they were hard to find. The most notable sightings were Sharp-shinned Hawks on Feb. 11, 24, and 26, a Merlin observed Jan. 30 and again on Feb. 7 around Fallowfield, and an immature Peregrine located in downtown Ottawa on Feb. 28.

Gulls are seldom seen in Ottawa during the heart of winter, so when one appears it is worth noting. A total of 3 species were reported along the Ottawa River: a Herring Gull on Jan. 30, an Iceland Gull Feb. 2 and 2 Great Black-backs Feb. 27. The latter were no doubt migrants.

Only a few Mourning Doves lingered this winter. Three or four were regular at the Mory Ave. feeder. Another 2 were spotted along Greenbank Rd. near the Jock River on Feb. 26.

Owls were, without question, the biggest highlight of the entire winter. Nearly every week, someone had either found a new species, or else had an exciting story to tell about one that had been seen. Most people searched hard for the Screech Owl at Billings Bridge. Bruce Dilabio solved that problem by catching one that had flown into a hollow tree on Moodie Drive. Many Great Horned Owls were observed towards the end of February, often well within the city limits. Snowys were hard to find in the early part of the winter, but regular birds were located on Greenbank and Armstrong Roads later in the period. Only the Hawk Owl at Old Chelsea was present with any regularity, and it remained through Jan. and Feb. A single Great Gray was seen in

mid-Feb. in Gatineau Park, and there were 2 reports of Saw-whets. One was found in Stittsville in early Feb. The other was seen twice at the Pink Rd. feeder, both times clutching a grosbeak.

Many observers reported seeing the impressive Pileated Woodpecker in both months. The Northern and Black-backed Three-toed were also quite regular, but the Black-backs were harder to find. A surprise visitor, the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, was seen in early Feb. in Stittsville. This species would have a difficult time surviving our winter.

A flock of up to 50 Horned Larks remained in the Cedarview Rd. area for most of the winter. Migrants began to appear late in February, a little behind schedule.

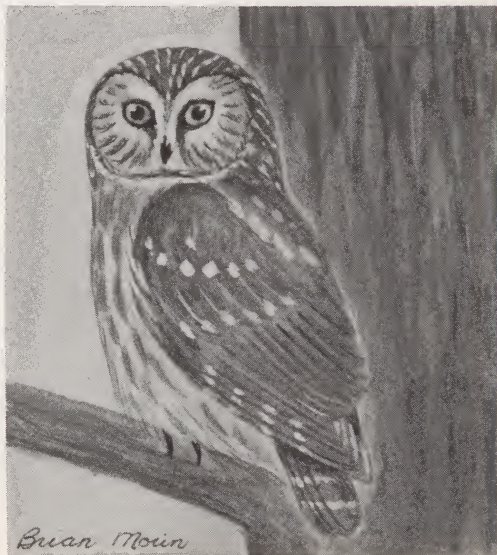
Several Gray Jays and Boreal Chickadees were appearing regularly at area feeders, with up to 4 Gray Jays and 6 Boreal Chickadees at the OFNC feeder in Aylmer. Six Jays were reported from Fortune Lake. Ravens, as usual, were observed around Poltimore (12 on Jan. 30) but 2 managed to stray south into Hull in late February. Migrant Crows started to arrive in the latter part of February.

The Hermit Thrush seldom overwinters in Ottawa, but this year 3 were seen in January, mainly in the vicinity of feeders. There were also 3 Mockingbirds, 2 in Jan. and one in Feb. The only Robin observed was a single bird on the Jack Pine Trail Feb. 13. Both Bohemian and Cedar Waxwings were noticeably lacking. Only one flock of 13 Bohemians turned up on Jan. 21 in Cantley. Cedars were even harder to find, as only a handful were seen in Feb. Northern Shrikes were also very scarce.

A few blackbirds spent the winter in the area. A Cowbird and a Grackle were present at both the Mory Ave. feeder and a feeder in Manotick throughout Feb., while other Redwings appeared sporadically.

Ottawa feeders attracted some interesting finches this winter. There were 2 or 3 regular Cardinals, notably the ones on Broadview St. Rarities included a Whitethroat on Feb. 1 and 9, a White-crowned at Mory Ave. throughout the period, and 2 Song Sparrows. Scads of Purple Finches made up for a lack of Redpolls, Crossbills and Pine Grosbeaks; some feeders had virtually hundreds. Snow Buntings and Longspurs were in good numbers and many turned up at feeding trays. A flock of 2000-4000 Snow Buntings was seen in Jan. at the Experimental Farm and up to 90 Longspurs were spotted at Navan.

Saw-whet Owl



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THE OTTAWA FIELD - NATURALISTS' CLUB
SUMMER PROGRAM

arranged by the Excursions and Lectures Committee
Roger Taylor (731-9270), Chairman

All times stated for excursions and walks are departure or starting times. Please plan to arrive at least 15 minutes early to avoid being left behind. Leaders are instructed to start promptly.

Tuesday
10 May

OFNC MONTHLY MEETING

TOXIC CHEMICALS AND WILDLIFE IN CANADA

Speaker: Mike Gilbertson, Environmental
Protection Service

Meet: Activity Centre, National Museum
of Man, Metcalfe and McLeod

Time: 8:00 p.m.

Sunday
15 May

BIRDING NORTH OF THE OTTAWA RIVER

Leader: John Dubois (684-7625)

Departure points Parking lot, NRC Sussex Drive: 6:00 a.m.
and times : and Hull Armoury: 5:30 a.m.

An excursion to look at birds on the Quebec side of the Ottawa River. Most of the commentary will be in French.

Saturday
21 May

SPRING WILDFLOWERS

Leaders: Ewen Todd (225-4316) and
David White (828-4185)

Meet: Loblaws, Carlingwood Shopping Centre

Departure Time 8:30 a.m.

Bring lunch and insect repellent

Sunday
29 May

BILINGUAL BIRDWALK THROUGH THE AYLMEYER AREA

Leaders: Monty Brigham (777-1675) and
John Dubois (684-7625)

Departure points Westgate Shopping Centre: 6:00 a.m.

and times : and Galleries d'Aylmer, Upper
Aylmer Road: 6:20 a.m.

BIRD WALKS AT VINCENT MASSEY PARK

A series of walks (3 to 4 hours) designed for beginning bird watchers. Binoculars are essential and waterproof footwear is advisable.

Saturday

7 May Leader: Roger Taylor (731-9270)
14 May Leader: Arnet Sheppard (722-0991)
21 May Leader: Jeff Harrison (232-8456)
28 May Leader: Brian Morin (824-8606)
Meet: Vincent Massey parking lot near
Heron Road bridge
Starting time: 7:30 a.m.

BIRD WALKS AT RAMSAYVILLE MARSH

Sunday

1 May Leader: Brian Morin (824-8606)
8 May Leader: Stephen O'Donnell (737-7791)
15 May Leader: Roger Foxall (745-7791)
Meet: Elmvale Shopping Centre at
St. Laurent and Smyth
Departure time: 7:00 a.m.

Walks last till noon. Bring waterproof footwear and binoculars.

MAY EVENING WALKS

Informal walks of general interest. Starting time is 6:30 p.m. weather permitting. Insect repellent may be useful

Thursday OTTAWA - CARLETON CONSERVATION AREA

5 May Leaders: Gavin Nicholson (722-6995) and
Jo-Anne Dean (728-2004)
Meet: Parking lot, west side of Moodie Drive
at the Hydro wires north of Jack Pine
nature trail.

Wednesday CARLINGTON WOODS

11 May Leader: Tony Erskine (225-2341)
Meet: End of Clyde Avenue at Castle Hill
Crescent (south side of the woods)

Wednesday BRITANNIA

18 May Leader: Arnet Sheppard (722-0991)
Meet: Entrance to Britannia filtration plant

Thursday PINHEY FOREST

26 May Leaders: Hue MacKenzie (226-1997) and
Jo Ann Murray (226-1997)
Meet: Parking lot on extreme east side of
Nepean Sportsplex

Sunday
5 June

GENERAL EXCURSION TO LAROSE FOREST

Leader: George McGee (733-1739)

Meet: Elmvale Shopping Centre

Departure time: 8:30 a.m.

One of the objectives of this walk is to look for pink
lady's slippers. Bring lunch, drink and insect repellent.

Saturday
11 June

BUTTERFLIES

Leader: Peter Hall (225-6046)

Meet: Supreme Court, Wellington Street

Departure time: 9:30 a.m.

Bring lunch and insect repellent.

Sunday
12 June

EXPLORATORY BREEDING BIRD WALK

Leader: Roger Foxall (745-7791)

Meet: Loblaw's, Carlingwood Shopping Centre

Departure time: 5:00 a.m.

A working but fun excursion to investigate the birds breeding in
an area that we know little about. Be prepared for wet habitats;
old clothes are recommended. Bring lunch, lots of insect repellent.

Tuesday
7 June

OFNC MONTHLY MEETING

CENTENNIAL PLANS

Discussion Leader: Hue MacKenzie

Meet: Activity Centre, National Museum of Man,
Metcalf and McLeod

Time: 8:00 p.m.

1979 is our Centennial year. A discussion of the various plans for
celebrating this event (see article in this issue of T&L) will be
led by the Centennial Steering Committee, Hue MacKenzie, Chairman.
Time permitting a film will be shown afterwards.

Saturday
25 June

LOCAL ORCHIDS

Leader: Jim Wickware (225-2658)

Meet: Loblaw's, Carlingwood Shopping Centre

Departure time: 9:00 a.m.

Be prepared for wet habitats. Bring lunch and insect repellent.

Saturday
2 July

GENERAL EXCURSION TO THE REGIONAL FOREST

Leaders: David White (828-4185) and

Bruce Barrett (836-5927)

Meet: Loblaw's, Carlingwood Shopping Centre

Departure time: 8:00 a.m.

For some insight into the natural history of this fascinating area
see the January 1977 issue of T&L. Bring lunch, waterproof footwear.

Saturday
9 July AFTERNOON CANOE TRIP INTO THE TAY MARSHES
Leader: Isabel Bayly (231-3836 office, or
827-2369 home)
Meet: Provincial picnic ground on right hand
side of Hwy 7 between Perth and Maberly
Time: 11:30 a.m.

All persons wishing to make this trip must contact Isabel Bayly
early for full details. Non-swimmers must bring life jackets.

Sunday
17 July GENERAL EXPLORATORY EXCURSION
Leader: Chuck Billington (770-4383)
Meet: Loblaws, Carlingwood Shopping Centre
Departure time: 7:00 a.m.
Another working but fun excursion, this time to explore
the natural history of a little-known area. Bring lunch,
insect repellent, and dress suitably.

Saturday
23 July BUS EXCURSION TO THE QUEEN'S U. BIOLOGICAL STATION
Leaders: Marsh Ney (733-4451) and
Brock Fenton (232-4796)
Meet: Arts Tower, Carleton University
Departure time: 1:00 p.m.
Cost: \$10.00 per person (includes dinner)

The agenda for this bus trip includes a tour of the Queen's
University Biological Station at Chaffey's Locks to see
research projects on fish ecology, breeding birds, etc., a
cook-out dinner and an evening excursion to find and listen
to bats. Good swimming facilities and a sandy beach available,
so bring towels and swimwear. All persons wishing to make
this trip should send a prepaid reservation to Ellaine Dickson,
2037 Honeywell Avenue, Ottawa K2A 0P7 to arrive before 16 July.
Name, address and phone number should be included with cheque or
money order made payable to The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club.
Expected departure time from Chaffey's Locks is 10:00 p.m.

Saturday
13 August MINERALOGICAL EXCURSION IN GATINEAU PARK
Leader: Dr. Donald Hogarth (741-4202)
Meet: Supreme Court, Wellington Street
Departure time: 8:30 a.m.
Half day trip. Bring snack and a hammer.

Sunday
28 August BIRDING IN THE WEST END
Leader: to be arranged
Meet: Britannia Drive-In Theatre
Departure time: 7:00 a.m.

Contributors, please note! DEADLINE: Material intended to appear in
the September issue of T&L should be in the Editor's hands by July 1.

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